

5 March 2015

Mr Colin Short  
Headteacher  
Reddish Vale High School  
Reddish Vale Road  
Stockport  
Cheshire  
SK5 7HD

Dear Mr Short

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Reddish Vale High School**

Following my visit to your academy with Peter McKay and John Leigh, Additional Inspectors, on 3 and 4 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014**

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all students, particularly those eligible for support from the pupil premium funding, those who have special educational needs and the most able students, achieve well, especially in English and mathematics and particularly in Key Stage 4, by:
  - using information that relates to students' progress to plan activities that match the need of all learners
  - providing appropriate support as well as much more challenge so that all students make the progress of which they are capable
  - raising the expectations of teachers as to the quality and quantity of work that should be produced by students
  - consistently providing clear guidance on how students can improve their work and making certain that students respond appropriately to that guidance
  - providing more opportunities for students to think for themselves, deepen their understanding and become more enthusiastic about learning.
  
- Urgently improve the safety of students, by:
  - ensuring there are robust and accurate systems for tracking attendance, both at the start of the day and within lessons
  - increasing students' attendance and reducing persistent absence, particularly for those who attend alternative provision, those students supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs
  - ensuring safeguarding arrangements for those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable to bullying and discrimination, for example, and/or attending off-site provision are secure, including ensuring that students have sufficient regard for their safety when they leave the site at the end of the school day
  - making certain that all groups of students, including those whose circumstances makes them vulnerable to bullying, and their parents, are confident that bullying is dealt with robustly.
  
- Improve the behaviour of students in lessons and around the school and reduce exclusions by:
  - encouraging students to have a positive attitude to their learning, including being punctual to the start of lessons
  - ensuring that staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy, both inside and outside the classroom.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - using information that the school has on students' progress and outcomes more accurately in order to check and understand exactly how well the school is doing
  - ensuring the procedures for checking the quality of teaching are robust and that everyone has a clear understanding of what good and outstanding learning looks like
  - making certain that the performance management system is having sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and that pay progression for staff is robustly linked to the outcomes for all students
  - making senior leaders more accountable for the outcomes of students
  - ensuring governors understand data so that they can accurately check the progress of all key groups for themselves
  - improving the way that governors and senior leaders check and understand the financial situation of the school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 3 to 4 March 2015.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work including work in students' books. They met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, groups of students and members of the governing body. The inspection team paid particular attention to leadership and management and the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors observed lessons across a range of subjects and year groups; seven of these were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed an assembly and scrutinised a range of documentation including the academy's current data on achievement, attendance and exclusions, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, the minutes of the governing body and the academy's self-evaluation document.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection the academy has appointed two permanent teachers of computing and of swimming; four temporary teachers of drama, English, computing, and languages; two temporary behaviour and learning mentors; an examinations officer; and a director of business and finance.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Data presented to inspectors indicate that current Year 11 students are likely to attain GCSE grades that are an improvement on the academy's 2014 results. Academy data also predict some closing of the gap in the levels of progress that disadvantaged students make compared to their peers. However, the academy is not expecting the one GCSE grade gap between disadvantaged students and their peers in 2014 to have closed by 2015. In 2014 18% fewer boys than girls made expected progress in English and mathematics; academy data show that this previous gap is beginning to close, although more so in English than in mathematics.

In the past the academy's assessment of students' achievement was shown to be inaccurate and overgenerous. Senior leaders now have more confidence in the data because the academy has commissioned external moderation of teacher assessments and this view is supported by the evidence collected by inspectors.

Students made at least good progress in approximately half of the lessons observed. Where learning was strongest teachers used progress data effectively to identify students' individual needs and plan appropriate activities. But in the majority of lessons insufficient reference was made to performance data resulting in the same tasks and expectations being set for all students. The attendance and achievement of students who are educated off site are now monitored effectively and absence or underachievement are promptly addressed.

## **The quality of teaching**

At the previous monitoring inspection in October 2014, inspectors observed students making good and better progress in approximately one third of lessons. During this inspection that proportion had increased to approximately half of lessons, demonstrating an improvement in the quality of teaching.

Teachers are increasingly planning lessons that engage students' interest and inspire them to learn. Examples of good practice included: a lesson on Macbeth where students used social media messaging to demonstrate their understanding of the plot and their empathy with the characters and a history lesson in which students analysed a cartoon satirising Stalin during the Cold War. However, in the lessons where learning was less effective, students were uninspired by the lesson content and how it was presented. In some classes, the work was far too easy and teachers missed opportunities to challenge students' thinking and deepen their knowledge. This sometimes led to poor behaviour that disrupted the learning of others.

The academy does not demonstrate a consistent approach to what constitutes good teaching and learning. The most effective learning in the academy takes place when teachers reflect on the learning that has taken place in previous lessons and use clear strategies to ensure all students make good progress regardless of their starting points. However, too many teachers find this practice difficult. When reflecting on the effectiveness of their teaching they tend to focus on the completion of planned activities and the behaviour of students rather than the appropriateness of the tasks and the quality of the learning.

The marking of students' work continues to improve and many students respond to their teachers' comments using the 'purple pen'. However, middle leaders are not ensuring that this is consistently applied. As a result, some students ignore their teacher's comments and continue to make the same mistakes. Many teachers mark students' spelling, punctuation and grammar but this too is inconsistent between and within subjects.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

A change to the timing arrangements for the morning and lunch breaks has resulted in a quieter, calmer atmosphere around the academy than seen at the previous monitoring inspection. Teachers are now fully aware of whether or not students have permission to be out of lessons and post-registration attendance to classes has risen. However, it remains the case that a significant proportion of students cannot be trusted to behave well around the school without direct adult supervision and too many lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour.

Students who met with inspectors expressed the view that behaviour in Key Stage 4 classes was invariably good with negligible time lost due to poor behaviour. However, students in Key Stage 3 reported that a significant proportion of their lessons were interrupted by disruptive behaviour and this meant the time available for learning was adversely effected. This was confirmed by one of the academy's own student voice exercises in which students agreed that 12% to 25% of lessons were disrupted by between 15% and 25% of students in the class.

Students and the parents and carers who responded to 'Parent View' are of the opinion that behaviour is improving at the academy. Students say that this is particularly so where teachers apply the new 'C system' behaviour strategy. However, the system is not applied consistently, with some teachers failing to follow through to the 'consequences' part. The academy continues to use the 'on call' process of removing disruptive students from lessons and since the introduction of the 'C system' in January 2015 the numbers removed has reduced by approximately half, although the proportions spending time in the academy's internal exclusion room are still very high. The percentage of fixed-term and permanent exclusions from the academy has increased since 2012.

Overall attendance continues to improve due to the diligence of the teachers who rigorously follow up all absences. Since February 2014, overall attendance has increased by 2.4% and the attendance of disadvantaged students has increased by 3.5% and is now close to the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has fallen by 5%, although the figures are still well above the national average. The past year has seen a big improvement in attendance for Key Stage 4 students but there has been little improvement in the attendance of students with disabilities or special educational needs, which remains well below the national average.

The students who met with inspectors said that incidents of bullying are dealt with well by the academy if it is reported. However, students in Key Stage 3 expressed the view that the bullying often continues after it has been reported and students are reluctant to report it again. All students spoken with demonstrated a 'zero tolerance' of prejudiced-based derogatory language but indicated that name calling related to appearance and ability remained a problem in Key Stage 3.

The robust systems for safeguarding that were in place at the last monitoring inspection are beginning to have an impact on students' perception of how safe they feel. In the past year data from 'Parent view' have shown an increase from 70% to 89% of parents who agree that their child feels safe in the academy.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Leaders have worked hard to keep the academy on track towards removal from special measures. Senior leaders and governors respond quickly to recommendations for improvement and the academy is steadily moving forward as a result. An improvement in the way teachers' performance is managed has led to higher expectations of their work and of student outcomes. Professional development that is focused on improving teaching and learning has energised teachers and increased morale, although the impact of this training is not always evident in day-to-day practice in the classroom.

Action planning and self-evaluation lack accurate reflection on the academy's strengths and areas for development and have too few quantifiable targets. This has led to senior leaders having an over-generous view of how well actions for improvement have had an impact on outcomes. The capacity of middle leaders continues to grow. They are now more accountable for the performance of their teams, although inconsistencies in the use of data and the marking of students' work are not always picked up.

Those responsible for the management of teaching and learning are unclear about what constitutes good learning and progress across the range of subjects. Therefore, teachers are not routinely challenged on their judgements about the progress of individuals and groups in their lessons and are not helped to understand how to raise academic expectations and improve outcomes.

The academy has introduced a range of student voice activities to engage students and their teachers across all subject areas. Governors have valued the input of student representatives at meetings of the governing body. It is, however, too early to judge the full impact of these initiatives, particularly on improvements to teaching and learning.

Governors are well placed to bring their considerable expertise, support and challenge to the leadership. The governing body membership is, however, quite small which reduces governors' capacity to work more closely with departments within the academy. Plans are in place to broaden and strengthen the membership of the governing body.

### **External support**

The academy continues to engage with the local authority school improvement team. Since the last monitoring inspection the local authority has completed a review of special educational needs, coached middle leaders and supported the academy in preparing to teach personal, social, health and economic education as a discrete subject from September 2015. The academy is working with two local schools to moderate teacher assessments and one of the schools is supporting the delivery of in-service training on teaching and learning. The impact of this support is beginning to show in improvements in teaching and learning but it is too early to judge the full impact on overall outcomes.